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Guevara Cremation Report Stirs Doubt

LA PAZ, Bolivia (UPI)—Doubts about the reported death of Cuban revolutionary Ernesto (Che) Guevara were stirred today with the announcement that his body had been cremated only hours before his brother arrived to identify it.

President Rene Barrientos confirmed that the body had been burned on the order of the armed forces but would give no explanation.

In addition, Barrientos said no proper autopsy had been performed on Guevara because of the lack of facilities in Vallegrande, the little town where the body was taken after a reported clash with guerrillas Sunday.

Guevara's brother Roberto, a lawyer in Buenos Aires, arrived yesterday afternoon in La Paz to seek permission to make positive identification of the body.

The Bolivian army said Guevara was clearly identified with the aid of fingerprints from his native Argentina. The army said he was then buried in a secret Andean grave.

But yesterday morning an army staff commission exhumed



ERNESTO (CHE) GUEVARA



ROBERTO GUEVARA

the body and cremated it, Barrientos said.

"This is a fait accompli," he said. "There is no more to be said."

Only a few hours earlier Barrientos had told a news conference that Guevara had been secretly buried and indicated the government would refuse any request to exhume the body for examination.

(Roberto Guevara refused to

say if he believed the man shot in Bolivia's jungles was his brother, but cousins and nephews in Buenos Aires said they doubted he was Che, the Associated Press reported. Radio-photos of the dead man showed a likeness, they said, but not enough to convince them of Guevara's death. One cousin said Che had written his father from Paris.)

The news brought to a cres-

cendo the versions circulating in La Paz of how Guevara died.

Inevitably, there were rumors that the bearded, bullet-ridden guerrilla shown to newsmen in Vallegrande Tuesday was not Guevara.

Bolivian officials said the evidence was absolutely conclusive and even normally skeptical U.S. officials said they were inclined to agree. It is an open secret that Central Intelligence Agency personnel were at Vallegrande.

(Further skepticism involved a military communique that said Guevara was wounded in a battle with government troops Sunday and died Monday. But a doctor who examined the body said one of seven bullets that struck it went through the heart, AP said.)

(It was assumed that Guevara could not have lived 24 hours with a bullet hole in his heart.)

(The army commander, Gen. Alfredo Ovando Candia, had told newsmen that Guevara "identified himself and admitted having failed." But Col. Joaquin Zentano, commander of the troops fighting the guerrillas, said, "Guevara was unable to say anything.")